

MINUTES OF A REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
OF THE SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND

A regular meeting of the Board of School Trustees of the School Town of Highland was held at the Administration Center, 9145 Kennedy Avenue, Highland, Indiana, on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

President Krull opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silent reflection.

On call of roll, the members of the Board were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Mr. Patrick Krull, Mr. Robert Kuva, Mrs. Erica Smith-Gomez, Mr. Victor Garcia, and Mr. Richard Alyea

Also present were Dr. Brian J. Smith, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Ryan Erdelac, Assistant Superintendent for Academics/Student Services; Mrs. Cindy Adams, Chief Financial Officer; and Mr. Rhett Tauber, Attorney for the Board.

Public Participation. A question followed on the average teacher salary. All teachers received an increase of \$2013.

Minutes of Regular Meeting October 15, 2025 and October 21, 2025. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the minutes of October 15, 2025 and October 21, 2025 as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Superintendent’s Report. Mr. Smith reported on the following:

- ☐ The theatre production of Neil Simons “Fools” will be this week. Since 50 students auditioned for the school play, which requires only 10 performers, the production will use a double cast this year—one cast performing on Thursday and Saturday, and the other on Friday and Sunday.
- ☐ Good luck to basketball coach Eric Kundich who is going for his 200th win.
- ☐ A safe and restful Thanksgiving break was extended to all.

Board Reports. Mr. Garcia liaison to the Highland/Griffith Chamber served as speaker at a recent meeting regarding the significant challenges facing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (**SNAP**) and its impact on food security in the region.

Mrs. Smith-Gomez attended the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative (NISEC) meeting. The Teachers Master Agreement was approved by the Board. Most NISEC teachers were given a \$900 base salary increase and a stipend based on length of years worked. In addition, the School Town did contribute a stipend from Title grant dollars received from the state for returning Highland teachers. Staff salaries/hourly rates were increased by 1%. Eagle Park will have a Thanksgiving luncheon on November 19

Mr. Krull attended a meeting of the Redevelopment Commission where two vendors presented potential redevelopment enhancements for the town.

1028 Public Hearing. Attorney Tauber stated that notice of the hearing was published in *The Times and Post Tribune* on October 6. Sean McGill, consultant for Baker Tilly, provided a summary of the proposed financing. He reported that approximately \$4,670,000 would be available for projects with a one year, 1 month assumed repayment term. He also reported on the total school tax rates. The School Town currently has the second lowest tax rate in Lake County. The projected tax rate for 2026 would be approximately \$0.8036, an increase of \$0.046 over 2025. The funds would support the purchase of buses, resurfacing two parking lots, iPads, and rooftop HVAC units. Attorney Tauber called for questions or comments. Hearing none, the following resolutions were submitted for consideration:

1028 Project Resolution - Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva to approve. All voted ‘aye’ motion carried.

Preliminary Determination Resolution – Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith Gomez, to approve. All voted “aye” motion carried.

Bond Resolution – Mrs. Smith Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Alyea, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Additional Appropriation Resolution – Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve the treasurer’s report as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Vouchers. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve the vouchers as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Donations. The administration recommended to accept a donation of \$11,374.99 from the Highland Education Foundation for all buildings and the following donations for high school Science Olympiad: \$535 from Stacy Snyder, \$1000 from Tri-State Industries, and \$500 from Roofers Local 26. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Buildings and Grounds. Mr. Mike Sukta, Manager of Buildings & Grounds, provided the Board with a report regarding the ongoing maintenance work over the past month.

Teacher Appreciation Grant. Dr. Erdelac reported that the School Town of Highland received \$116,230.05 for distribution to eligible teachers. A discussion followed on the change in the allocation of the funds by the state. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mr. Garcia, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Professional Leaves. The administration presented professional leave requests for the following: **Anthony Belli**-iLearn, October 31, 2025; **Jason Quigg**-Tour of Cleveland Cliffs/Ivy Tech, November 7, 2025; **Liz Tsakopoulos**, ACP Virtual Workshop, November 7, 2025; **Amy Harrington**-NWISIT Q4 meeting, November 12, 2025; **Rachel Jennings**-CPI Instructor Certification, November 20, 2025; **Cheryl Fleming, Lisa Kelly, Kaitlyn Lopez, Sarah Nagel, Rachel Roberts** and **Hailey Rudoff**- PLTW Training, November 5, 2025; **Kevin Beveridge, Christina Davis** and **John Zach**-IASP Conference, November 24-25, 2025; **Anthony Belli** and **Christina Davis**-IAG Conference, December 15-16, 2025; **Ben Geffert**-Football Sectional meeting, October 23, 2025; **Courtney Condes**-Quarterly AD meeting, October 31, 2025; **Britni Luster**-NWIESC monthly meeting, December 8 and December 10, 2025. Mr. Kuva moved, seconded by Mrs. Smith-Gomez, to approve. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Retirement/Resignations. Dr. Smith presented the retirement of **Cindy Adams**, Chief Financial Officer and the resignations of **Scott Carlson**, high school teacher, effective October 28, 2025 and **Lauren Makarauskas**, high school teacher and diving coach, effective December 19, 2025. Mrs. Smith-Gomez moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to accept/approve as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Appointments. Dr. Smith presented the following recommendations for the 2025-2026 school year: **Rico Maldonado**, volunteer 7th grade basketball program; **Michael Gamaleri**, volunteer high school baseball program; **Josh Daniels**, high school volunteer boys wrestling program; **Sarah Russell**, Title I aide; **Summer Rodriguez**, Warren ELL aide; **Stacey Myszkiewicz**, Warren Title I; **George Tucker**, high school freshman basketball coach; the transfer of **Eileen Russell** from ELL aide to a TRA position; and **Johanna Oliver**, bus aide, effective November 10, 2025. Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Alyea, to approve the above recommendations as presented. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.

Audience Comments. Comments were made regarding the rewarding of TAG money and teachers who have a positive effect on their students.

Board Comments. Members of the Board extended their best wishes to Mrs. Adams on her retirement, expressed gratitude to all who made donations, particularly the Highland Education Foundation, offered good luck to the theatre group and to Coach Kundich, and wished all a happy Thanksgiving holiday.

Future Meeting. The Board will next meet in regular session on Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Garcia moved, seconded by Mr. Kuva, to adjourn at 7:00 p.m. after the signing of claims in the amount of \$2,297,961.50, minutes, resolutions, payroll file totals, etc. All voted “aye.” Motion carried.